

# Annie People

The Little Orphan Annie Fan Club Newsletter

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**ANNIE: A ROYAL ADVENTURE, STARRING ASHLEY JOHNSON,  
TO AIR ON ABC-TV ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18**

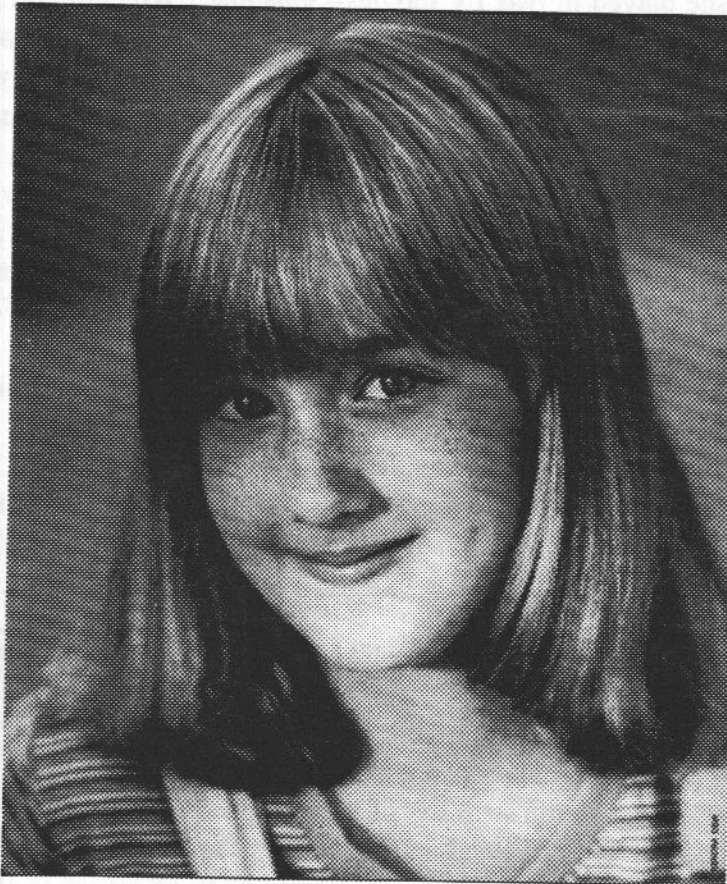


Photo courtesy of Scott Appel

The long-awaited Rastar Productions sequel to 1982's *Annie* movie is finally here! This film is not a musical, but rather an adventure film like the comic strip which made LOA famous. Annie and "Daddy" Warbucks go from New York to London so that "Daddy" can be knighted (the original title of the film was *Sir Daddy*), but, in true LOA fashion, they run into all sorts of trouble when they get there from which they must escape. Tune in to see what happens!

## MEET TV'S ANNIE:

### ASHLEY JOHNSON

Although this will be Ashley Johnson's first acting experience with anything to do with Orphan Annie, she is very familiar to us all through her extensive TV and movie work. Currently, the 12-year-old blue-eyed blonde is starring as Gracie in *Maybe This Time* on ABC-TV on Saturdays opposite Betty White and Marie Osmond, a role she began this season. Previously, Ashley starred as Angela Goethals' little sister Mary Margaret on the highly underrated show called *Phenom*, which was on ABC for only a single season. And before that, her first series was *Growing Pains*, on which she played Chrissy for a couple of seasons toward the end of that very successful sitcom's network run.

Born August 9, 1983, Ashley began doing printwork in catalogs when she was 2 and living in Detroit. At this time, her older sister Haylie was doing local TV commercials, and Ashley began doing some too, everything from Fruity Pebbles cereal to Mattel toys. While she was still in Detroit, she won the title of Miss Junior Michigan in 1989 when she was 6. Eventually, she went to California to audition for the movie *Lionheart*, in which she landed her film debut opposite Jean-Claude Van Damme. From that point on, the Johnsons have been a California family, living in the San Fernando Valley near Los Angeles.

Ashley sang "Broadway Baby" on *Star Search*, which led to her being discovered by the producers of *Growing Pains* to fill the role of the youngest Seaver, curly-haired Chrissy. After *Growing Pains*, she played in two TV movies--*Someone's Watching* on NBC, and *Men Don't Tell* on CBS. In the latter film she played Judith Light's daughter; that was a coincidence, because she later played her daughter again on ABC's *Phenom*. Ashley was described as "the show's break-out star" in her portrayal of the parochial school younger sister of a teenage tennis star played by Angela Goethals. Ashley won a 1994 Youth In Film Award as Best Young Actress, repeating the same award she had won for *Growing Pains*.

Most recently, Ashley did a very funny featured guest spot this year on *Roseanne* playing D.J.'s very demanding girlfriend. She also had a regular role as Casey on *All-American Girl* on ABC, and she played Tom Arnold's daughter in the 20th Century Fox feature film *Nine Months*.

Ashley is very active in causes that benefit sick and disadvantaged children and does charity work with The Children's Miracle Network, Starlight Foundation, Make A Wish Foundation, UCP, and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

We are very proud that this active young actress is bringing her outstanding talents to once again bring our favorite red-haired orphan to life on the screen via Rastar Productions.

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### THE COMIC STRIP STAMPS ARE OUT!

If you haven't seen them already, stop off at your local post office and pick up a set of the new 32-cent comic strip stamps. It is a very colorful pane of 20, each depicting a comic strip star of the past and present, and you'll see Annie and her faithful Sandy right there in the middle of the 20-stamp pane. Observant Annie fans will recognize the picture as Harold Gray art which is also on the cover of *Arf! The Life And Hard Times Of Little Orphan Annie*. That of course was the book that Martin Charnin bought in 1971 which gave him the idea to create a musical about Annie.



Each stamp has information about each comic strip on the back, which provides an interesting piece of history about LOA and all those next to her in the funny papers over the years.

## INTERVIEW WITH "THE NEW ANNIE"

In October I conducted a phone interview with Ashley Johnson from her California home about *Annie: A Royal Adventure*, her past and present sitcoms, and what she does in between filmings and tapings. Ashley is an articulate, charming, and extremely personable young lady, and it was a great pleasure chatting with her. Many thanks to Scott Appel for being so kind as to arrange this interview for *Annie People*. Portions of my talk with Ashley follow:

AP: First of all, Ashley, I understand you have played the title role in the *Annie* play?

AJ: No, I haven't done the play. I played one of the Lost Boys in *Peter Pan* in Michigan before I moved to California, but not *Annie*.

AP: I guess I got that idea from an episode of *Growing Pains* when all the characters were playing themselves in real life and you mentioned you were going to play Annie--

AJ: No, that was just a line written for the show. I sang "Tomorrow," though.

AP: I remember! Have you ever been to see the play?

AJ: Not the play, but when my sister and I were younger, we used to watch the movie every day, and we love it. We learned all the dances too while we were watching.

AP: I guess you probably haven't seen the comic strip either, which is still going after over 70 years in the funny papers.

AJ: Wow! Nope. I've always wanted to see what it looked like.

AP: Well, the movie you're in was written with the idea of being like the comic strip--not a musical, but an adventure story instead. Let's talk about that...where was it filmed?

AJ: It was all done in London. Some scenes were supposed to be New York, but it was really all London. They just made it look like New York.

AP: How'd you like London? I hope you got to see some of it while you were over there.

AJ: I loved it! We were in the Knightsbridge area. I loved seeing Big Ben. And we went to three castles outside London to do part of the filming. The castles were the best part!

AP: That sounds like the Little Orphan Annie strip! I can't imagine Orphan Annie without some castles and dungeons somewhere along the way--

AJ: Yup, there was a dungeon. That was a lot of fun.

AP: Well, I won't ask you too much about that, so we can all be surprised on November 18 about the plot. So, how long were you over there doing the movie?

AJ: About two months during the summer.

AP: Tell me about some of your favorite parts of when you were filming.

AJ: I got to ride an old-fashioned bike. I also got to ride on a big boat, a ship. But the castles were the best part.

AP: Old-fashioned bike? When is the plot supposed to be taking place?

AJ: I think it was 1945 or something like that.

AP: Sounds like it must have been around World War II time in Europe, about 50 years ago.

AJ: Yeah, that's when it was.

AP: Next--I know our readers will be wondering: Annie does wear a red dress, doesn't she?

AJ: Oh, yes!

AP: And a curly Orphan Annie wig?

AJ: Yup. I had two of them, in case one got wet or something.

AP: Let's find out about the other characters. Who's in it along with Annie?

AJ: There's "Daddy" Warbucks, and he's played by George Hearn. He played the butler in *Sunset Boulevard*. And then there's Lady Hogbottom--I won't tell you too much about what she does so it won't spoil the plot--but she's played by Joan Collins. They were wonderful to work with. Let's see--Miss Hannigan is played by--

AP: *Miss Hannigan* is in this movie??

AJ: Oh, sure! Carol Cleveland plays her.

AP: That's a surprise! I can't wait to see how they worked Miss Hannigan in. Also, were there any other kids with you?

AJ: There's Molly, and she's played by Camilla Bell. And there's another friend of Annie's named Hannah.

AP: Now, there *must* be a dog in the movie; I certainly hope so!

AJ: Oh, she was wonderful! Her name was Jessie, and she looks just like Sandy.

AP: Did you have to train with Jessie a little?

AJ: Yes, I had to learn to walk with her. We worked on that in Hyde Park.

AP: I suppose you have worked with animals before in your career, but I guess this must have been the most extensive work with an animal you've done so far.

AJ: There was a puppy on *Growing Pains*, but this was the most. I love animals.

AP: I've heard you have a whole lot of pets at home.

AJ: We sure do! Let's see, 5 cats--

AP: 5 cats!

AJ: Yup. One of them is named Bob Barker. And we have 2 dogs; we call one of them Fred Mertz. And we also have a great big parrot. He makes a lot of noise.

AP: I do want to ask you one more thing about being Annie, and that is, when you were playing her, did you get a feeling of what her personality is like? I mean, even though you haven't read the comic strip, I'm sure the director got you to try to think like her. Do you think you're like Annie a little?

AJ: She's a lot like me. I think we're kind of alike, since she likes to go on adventures and I like to go on adventures.

AP: Well, I know you'll be great in the movie, and this will be a little different for *Annie* fans, since usually in the past when a new Annie came along, she was someone we had never seen, but we've all seen you in lots of other roles, and now we'll get to see you as Annie! We'll all be anxiously waiting for November 18 to see it. So, that's about all I have for now, Ashley, except that I sure do enjoy watching *Maybe This Time*. I also loved *Phenom*, especially the episode about the dance class.

AJ: Yeah, that was fun! I loved the costumes.

AP: I also liked the guest shot on *Roseanne* when you played D.J.'s obnoxious girlfriend--

AJ: (laughter)

AP: Do you hang out with any of the other kids who are on TV shows now?

AJ: Well--I know the three kids from *Home Improvement*, since both our shows are on the same lot.

AP: Are you tutored on your set, or do you go to your regular school?

AJ: I get tutored most of the time, but in between I go back to my own school.

AP: Middle school this year?

AJ: Yup. I love it!

AP: Ashley, thanks very much, and good luck with your series. We'll all be thinking of you as we get ready to watch on November 18!

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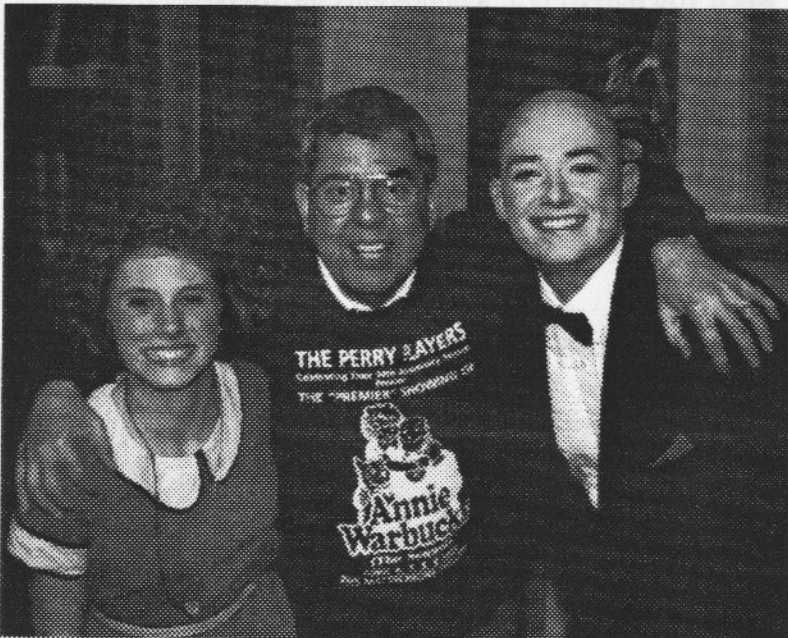
*Note:* By the time the January issue of AP comes out, we will be able to pass along some more exciting news about *Annie: A Royal Adventure*, so stay tuned!



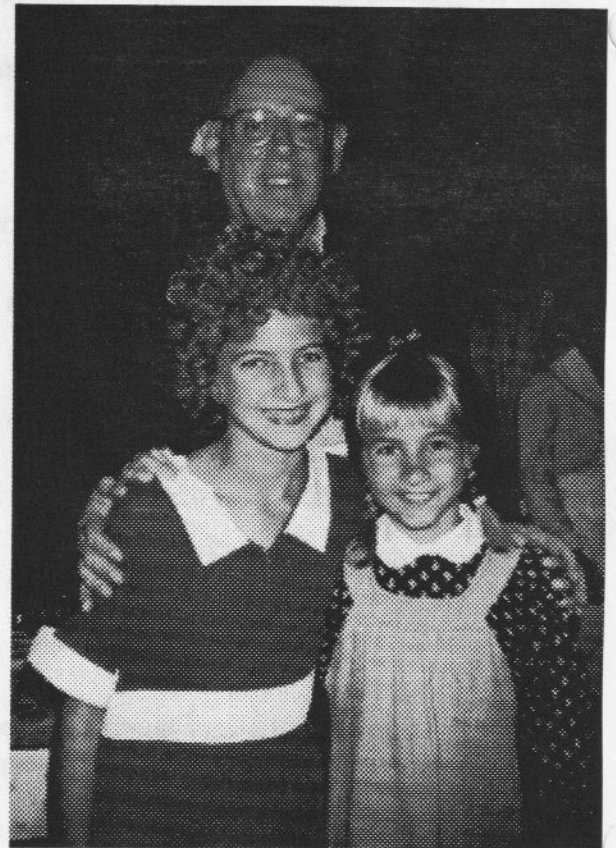
**Ann-Marie Sepe, who played Annie for the Young Performers Workshop in Hackettstown, NJ**



**Annie Warbucks in Irwin, PA August 1995—Cynthia Moser and Jon Merrill with (back row) Abbie Harper, Adrienne Welsch, Catherine Murray, Lea Stern, Emily Devore, (front row) Jennifer Tancaitor, Megan Welsch, Gena Eremia, Kristen Lyons**

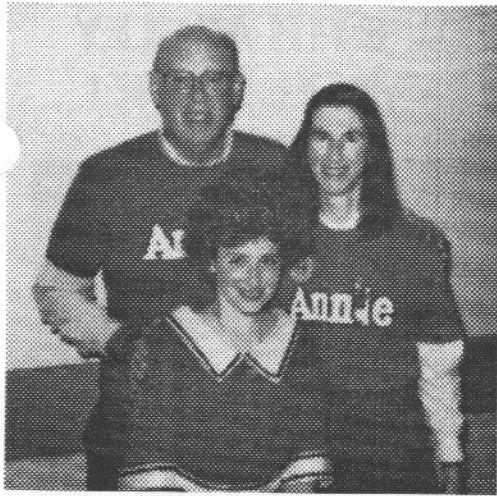


**Perry Township, OH April 1995—Annie Warbucks area premiere. Tara Noggle, director Louie Mattachione, Todd Cooper**

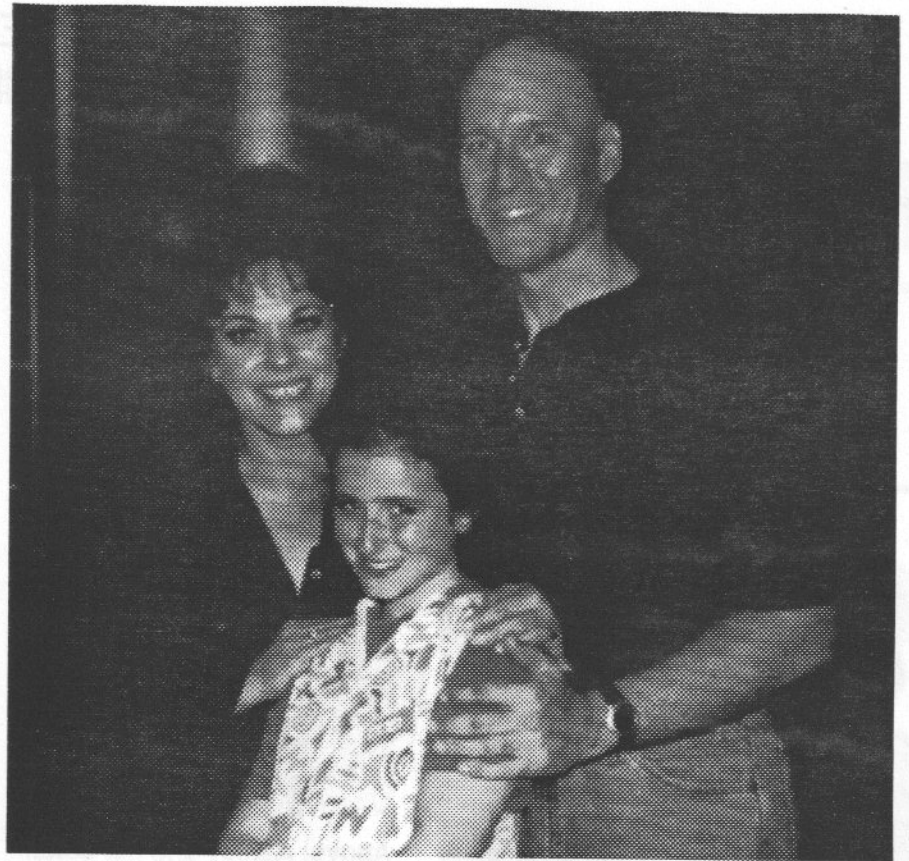


**Irwin, PA August 1995—Jon with Adrienne Welsch (Annie Warbucks) and Megan Welsch (Molly)**

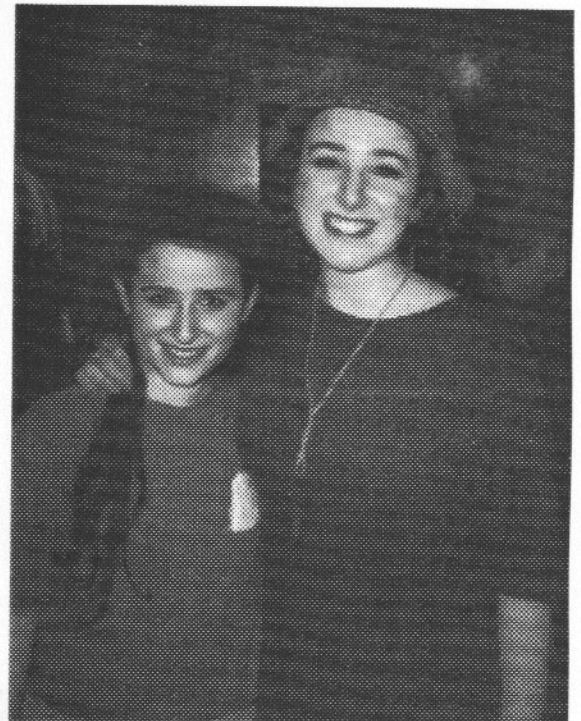
photos on these two pages were submitted by Cynthia Moser



3 photos on this page are from *Annie* at the West Virginia Public Theater in Morgantown WV July 1995. Above: Jon and Cynthia with Kelly Flynn. Right: Alene Robertson (Miss Hannigan), Kelly Flynn (Annie) and John Kenton Shull (Oliver Warbucks)



Kelly Flynn as Annie with Orphans: Jessica Ranalli, Kelly Shannon Lynch, Jamie Shapiro, Alece Deluca, Eliza Chetlin, Laura Beth Lester, Rebecca Nance



Parma Heights, OH June 1995—Kelly Flynn as Mary and Julie Flynn as Rose in *The Secret Garden*

# LEAPIN' LIZARDS! AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEY JOHNSON, THE STAR OF THE UPCOMING ANNIE TV MOVIE!



Above: Ashley and her sister Haylie, who is also an actress



photos courtesy of Scott Appel

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Little Orphan  
**Annie**